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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KOLKATA 000212

SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: 21 KILLED IN FRESH MAOIST ATTACK IN ORISSA

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On July 16, Communist Party of India - Maoist (Maoists) insurgents killed at least 21 people, including 17 policemen, by blowing up an anti-landmine vehicle in the Malkangiri district of the eastern Indian State of Orissa. This is the first time in Orissa an anti-landmine vehicle was blown up by landmines set by the Maoists. The attack came barely 18 days after the Maoists had killed over 30 anti-Maoist greyhound commandos of the Andhra Pradesh police in the same area on June 29. These attacks reflect a recent increase in Maoist violence in eastern India. The Orissa government is concerned about the Maoists' strong logistical capacity to mount large, well-armed assaults on even anti-landmine patrol vehicles. On July 16 the Union government announced that six jungle warfare and counter insurgency schools will be set up this year to train commando forces raised by the four affected states of Chattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Jharkhand. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) An official of Orissa's Home Department informed post that the attack on the Orissa's Special Operation Group (SOG) of the police was conducted by the Maoists and resulted in 21 deaths, including 17 security forces, in the southwestern Malkangiri district of the state. The source added that apart from the SOG members, there were four "informers and helpers" traveling in the vehicle. All the victims were traveling in an anti-landmine vehicle and were returning from the house of a local Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader that was attacked and looted by suspected Maoists on July 15. This is also the first time in Orissa that an anti-landmine vehicle was hit by landmines set by the Maoists.

¶3. (SBU) The blast was also followed by an exchange of fire between the Maoists and about 10 security forces following the vehicle in their motorcycles. Home Department sources added that although a detailed spot report has not yet been filed, it seems that the anti-landmine vehicle was not totally destroyed in the blast, and that the SOG members were gunned down by the Maoists when they tried to come out from the overturned vehicle.

The Maoist fled the scene after a brief encounter. This second major attack came 18 days after the Maoists had killed over 30 anti-Maoist greyhound commandos of the Andhra Pradesh police in the same district on June 29.

¶4. (SBU) The Maoist attack occurred on a day when senior officials of the Union government and four Maoist-affected states - Orissa, Chattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh and Jharkhand - were meeting in New Delhi to address the increasing security threat from Maoists. While addressing the meeting, the Union Home Secretary Madhukar Gupta announced that six jungle warfare and counter-insurgency schools will be set up this year to train

the commando forces raised by the four affected states. The location of the school has not yet been decided. Gupta stressed the need for strengthening intelligence network and modernization of the security forces. The Union government has also asked all the affected states to fill up vacancies in the police forces.

21 killed in fresh Maoist attack in Orissa

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¶5. (SBU) Comment: Maoist violence appears to be on the rise in the isolated rural districts along the border of Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. The attacks demonstrate that the Maoists have the organizational and logistical capacity to support larger combat operations than they have normally undertaken in the past. While the Union government move to set up training schools to contain Maoists violence indicates a willingness to

meet this rising challenge head-on, it remains to be seen if 1) how soon these schools can be up and running, and 2) how effective they can be given the deteriorating security situation in many of the districts where the schools would presumably be located.

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